

per cent. of the ordinary income of the Board was expended on medical relief and sanitation.

**LOCAL  
BOARDS.**

In subordination to the District Board are the Khulnā, Bāgherhāt and Sātkhirā Local Boards, the jurisdiction of each corresponding to the subdivisional charge of the same name. The Khulnā Local Board has 12 members, all nominated by Government. The Bāgherhāt Local Board has 12 members, of whom three are elected, eight are nominated by Government, and one is an *ex-officio* member. The Sātkhirā Local Board has 15 members, of whom eight are elected, six are nominated, and one is an *ex-officio* member. The functions of these bodies are unimportant, consisting mainly of the administration of village roads and the control of pounds and ferries.

**UNION  
COMMIT-  
TEES.**

There are 6 Union Committees in the district, viz., Senhāti (20 square miles), Dumriā (5 square miles), Bāgherhāt (12 square miles), Mulghar (20 square miles), Kalārōi (20 square miles) and Māgura (5 square miles), with an aggregate population of 67,977. The first four Union Committees were created in 1895 and the last two in 1896. The Committees are each composed of 9 members, and the duties entrusted to them consist of village sanitation and the upkeep of village roads and drains within their respective jurisdictions.

**MUNICI-  
PALITIES.**

At the close of the year 1906-07 there were 3 municipalities in the district, viz., Khulnā, Sātkhirā and Debhātā. The number of rate-payers was 5,001, representing 19 per cent. of the total number (26,315) of persons residing within municipal limits, as compared with the average of 19.7 per cent. for the whole of the Presidency Division. The average incidence of taxation in that year was annas 13-8 per head of the population, as against the Divisional average of Rs. 1-7-8, and varied from annas 4-6 in Debhātā to Rs. 1-6-8 in Khulnā.

**Khulnā.**

The Khulnā Municipality was established in 1884, and its affairs are administered by a Municipal Board, consisting of 15 members, of whom ten are elected, and one is nominated, while four are *ex-officio* members. The area within municipal limits is 4.64 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 2,000 or 19 per cent. of the population. The average annual income for the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 21,600, and the expenditure was Rs. 19,800. In 1906-07 the receipts amounted to Rs. 24,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 20,000, the main sources of revenue being a tax on persons, levied at the rate of 1 per cent. on the annual income of the rate-payers, which brought in Rs. 5,000. There is also a conservancy rate, levied at the rate of 12 per cent. on the valuation of holdings. This rate also realised Rs. 5,000

and Rs. 4,000 were obtained from a tax on houses and lands. The total income from municipal rates and taxes was Rs. 15,000, and the incidence of taxation was Re 1-6-8 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 35,000, of which Rs. 14,000 or 50 1 per cent. were spent on water-supply, and Rs. 6,000 or 21·5 per cent. on conservancy, while Rs. 6,200 or 22·7 per cent. were expended on medical relief.

The municipality at Sātkhina was established in 1869. It is *Sātkhina*, administered by a Municipal Board consisting of 12 members, of whom eight are elected and four are nominated by Government. The area within municipal limits is 12 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 2,037, representing 19·6 per cent. of the population residing within the municipal area. The average annual income for the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 4,600 and the expenditure was Rs. 1,500. In 1906-07 the receipts amounted to Rs. 8,500, besides a small opening balance of Rs. 400. The principal sources of revenue are a tax on persons levied at the rate of 1 per cent. on the annual income of the rate-payers, which brought in Rs. 4,000, and a latrine tax levied at the rate of 12 per cent. on the annual value of holdings, which brought in Rs. 1,300. The aggregate income from municipal rates and taxes was Rs. 6,200, and the incidence of taxation was annas 9-6 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 8,600, of which Rs. 3,000 or 33·5 per cent. were expended on medical relief, Rs. 1,600 or 18 per cent. on conservancy and Rs. 1,100 or 12·8 per cent. on water-supply.

Debhātā was constituted a municipality in 1876 and is *Debhātā*, administered by a Municipal Board consisting of 12 members, all of whom are nominated by Government. The area within municipal limits is 3·3 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 964 representing 17·6 per cent. of the population living within the municipal area. The average annual income and expenditure for the decade ending in 1901-02 were Rs. 2,200 and Rs. 2,000 respectively. In 1906-07 the total income was Rs. 1,800, the principal item in the receipts being a tax assessed at the rate of 1 per cent. on the annual income of the rate-payers, which brought in Rs. 1,500. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 1,700, the principal item being public works which accounted for 43 per cent. of the disbursements.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## EDUCATION.

**PROGRESS OF EDUCATION.** At the census of 1901 special enquiry was made regarding the literacy of the people, the test of literacy being the ability both to read and write. People of whatever age who could do this were entered as literate, and those who could not, as illiterate. The qualification seems a simple one, but even so only 6.9 per cent. of the population of Khulna could pass it, the proportion in the case of males being 12.4 per cent. and in the case of females 0.8 per cent. On the other hand, no other district in the Presidency Division had such a good record, except the 24 Parganas; and the advance since 1881 has been very noticeable, for in that year only 6.7 per cent. of the males and 0.1 per cent. of the females of the district could read and write.

According to the statistics prepared by the Education Department, there were altogether 752 schools attended by 31,822 pupils in the latter year, and the number rose to 1,257 schools and 30,269 pupils in 1891. During the next 10 years many schools were closed owing to the distress caused by natural calamities, for the crops were short in 1893-94, part of the district was visited by a cyclone in 1895, and there was a famine in 1897. The result was that in 1900-01 the number of schools had declined to 983 and the attendance had only increased to 34,356. The loss has since been made good, for in 1906-07 there were, in addition to an Arts college, 1,102 schools with 40,114 pupils on the rolls. For the supervision of the schools there is a staff consisting of 2 Deputy Inspectors of Schools, 7 Sub-Inspectors and one Assistant Sub-Inspector.

The majority of the schools are situated in the more advanced tracts bordering on the rivers, which contain large and populous villages inhabited by the higher classes of Musalmāns and Hindus. The southern parts of the district bordering on the Sunderbans, and the marshy tracts intervening between the rivers, are inhabited chiefly by Pods, Chandāls, and the lower classes of Musalmāns, themselves descendants of converted Pods and Chandāls. In these tracts there are only a few Middle class schools,

and even the Primary schools are few and far between, and are thinly attended. Moreover, many of the latter are either closed or remain open only in name during the busy seasons of ploughing, sowing, transplantation, and reaping, when the boys are required to look after the cattle, and to perform other unimportant agricultural work, while the adults are busy in the fields.

There is one Arts college in the district established a few years ago at Daulatpur, called the Khulna-Daulatpur Hindu Academy. It is now affiliated to the University, and is reported to be doing good work; it has a boarding house attached to it.

There are no less than 23 High schools in the district, attended by 3,628 pupils, giving an average of 158 pupils to each school. One of these schools, the Khulna Zila school, is maintained by Government, one, the Paygrām-Kasba High school at Kasba, is aided by the District Board, and eight are aided by Government, viz., the Bagherhat school, the Sātkhira Prānnath school at Sātkhira, the B. De School at Tala, the Bāhirdia school at Mansā, the Daulatpur school, the Khareria school at Mulghar, the Naldha school at Naldha, and the Babulia Jaimini Srināth Institution at Babulia. There are also 12 unaided schools, viz., the Ajogara school at Pāl's Hat Bazar, the Banagrām Century school at Banagrām, the Khalsakhali-Māgura school at Khalsākhali, the Khālispur, Nakipur, Phultala, Senhāti, Rangdiā and Miksimil schools, the Phultala Union school at Paygrām, and the Karuli-Katipara-Banka-Bhawānipur Harischandra Institution at Karuli. The number of schools of this class and the large attendance at them are eloquent of the increasing demand for English education, for in 1881 there were only 4 High schools attended by 439 boys and the number gradually rose to 8 schools with 1,250 pupils in 1890 and to 17 with 3,185 pupils in 1900-01. There are two hostels attached to the Khulna Zila School, one for Hindu and the other for Muhammadan students.

There has been a similar increase in the number of Middle English schools, the number rising from 12 in 1881 to 19 in 1890 and to 26 in 1900-01, the attendance rising in the same three years from 643 to 1,429 and 1,730. There are now altogether 32 schools of this class attended by 2,110 pupils, giving an average of 63 pupils at each school. There has, however, been a decrease in the number of Middle Vernacular schools, of which there were 46 with 2,226 boys on the rolls in 1890; for though the number of these schools rose to 46 and the attendance to 2,337 in 1901, the returns for 1906-07 show only 36 schools with 1,602 pupils, representing an average of 46 per school. The gradual decline



of Middle Vernacular schools is not a feature peculiar to Khulnā and is partly explained by the fact that some of these schools have been raised to the status of Middle English schools.

**PRIMARY  
EDUCATION.**

The number of boys' Primary schools in 1906-07 was 855, at which instruction was given to 29,196 pupils. Of these schools, 100 attended by 4,205 boys were Upper Primary schools, and 755 attended by 24,991 boys were Lower Primary schools, the average attendance at each class of school being 42 and 33 respectively. The progress of primary education in Khulnā does not appear from the returns to be very satisfactory, for in 1890 there were 1,141 Primary schools attended by 27,533 pupils, while the number of schools fell in 1900-01 to 875 and of the pupils to 25,946. The number of schools has still further declined since the year last named, though this is not altogether a matter of regret as it is due to the disappearance of many weak and ephemeral schools. The number of pupils has increased by a little more than 3,000, but it is still only 1,500 more than in 1890 in spite of the subsequent growth of the population.

**FEMALE  
EDUCATION.**

The progress of female education on the other hand has been very marked in recent years, the number of girls receiving instruction having risen during the last five years from 2,610 to 4,221, representing an advance of over 60 per cent. There are now 123 schools with 2,640 girls on the rolls, and besides these there are 1,581 girls studying in boys' schools. The Khulnā Municipal girls' school has recently been converted into a Model Primary school, and it is noticeable that 23 girls attend Middle English schools.

**TECHNICAL  
EDUCATION.**

The only technical institution in the district is the Coronation Technical school at Khulnā opened in 1905, which is maintained and managed by the District Board. The boys are taught carpentry and weaving, and the number on the rolls is 40. There is also an agricultural garden attached to the Zila school; and there is a technical department attached to the Khulnā National School mentioned below.

**TRAINING  
SCHOOLS.**

There are 3 schools for the training of Primary schools teachers, known as Guru-training schools or third grade training schools, situated one in each of the 3 subdivisions. A training school was also opened at Nandanpur in 1905 for the education of Hindu and Muhammadan widows and schoolmasters' wives, but this school was closed from the 1st May 1907 until a competent teacher could be found.

**OTHER  
SCHOOLS.**

Among other schools may be mentioned a National School, established at Khulnā in 1907, which has about 100 boys on the rolls. It is under the management of some members of

the local Bar, and is maintained by private subscriptions. There is also a separate school at Khulnā for infant boys of 4 to 6 years of age. Other schools include 6 Sanskrit *śālās*, 10 Muhammadan *makhtabs* and 11 night continuation schools. There is also one private institution, a Korān school, which is attended by 25 boys.

The Muhammadans of the district cannot be described as MUHAM-  
otherwise than backward in respect of education. Though they MADA-  
account for 61 per cent. of the population, while the Hindus EDUCA-  
represent only 39 per cent., the number of Hindus at schools is TION.  
26,485 or 66 per cent. of the total number, whereas the Muham-  
madans account for only 13,458 pupils or 33·55 of the total  
number receiving instruction.

There are six libraries situated at Khulnā, Satkhirā, Sripur, LIBRA-  
Māgurā, Khesra and Kuṭrul; besides three new libraries estab- RIES AND  
lished in 1904-05, viz., one at Karapārā, another at Bāgherhāt NEWS-  
called the Harisabha Library, and a third at Belphulia. PAPERS,  
There are two weekly newspapers, the *Khulnābāshī*, which has some local  
importance, and the *Jāgaran* published at Bāgherhāt. Another  
weekly paper, the *Khulnā*, was formerly published, but ceased to  
exist in 1904. It was revived in 1906 and then again disappear-  
ed, the *Khulnā Sunid* taking its place.

## CHAPTER XV.

## GAZETTEER

**Alāipur.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated at the junction of the Athārābānkā and Bhairab rivers. Population (1901) 1,190. It had formerly a large local trade, but owing to the silting up of the Bhairab its importance as an entrepôt is on the decline. There is still, however, a considerable sale of *gur* or molasses, and excellent pottery is manufactured. Professor Blochmann surmises that Alāipur may have been the residence of Sultān Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh at the close of the 15th century before he became king of Bengal.

**Amadi.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated on the river Kabalāk about 7 miles south of Chāndkhālī. Close to the river bank are two tombs placed lengthways north and south, which are said to be the tombs of Bura Khān and Fateh Khān, father and son, two followers of Khān Jahān Alī. The northern tomb is on the bank of the river, and was said to be on verge of falling into it in 1870. These tombs were once cemented, but nearly all the cement has worn off, and they have now the appearance of ordinary brick tombs. A little further south is a raised piece of land, with a brick foundation, surrounded by two or three small tanks and a long artificial trench. According to local tradition, this elevation marks the site of the cutcherry (*lāchhārī*) of Bura and Fateh Khān. Further south still is a large tank called the Kalki-dighī; it is now a mass of marshy jungle, but the surface included within its high embankments is said to measure 100 *bighas*. The tank has no masonry *ghāt*, but in the centre of each of the four sides rises a cluster of tamarind trees. Along the river bank, at a point a little beyond the tombs, is another large tank called the Hāthi-bāndh. Near this tank, Sir James Westland writes in his *Report on the District of Jessore*, "there lies, and has lain during all the memory of the present generation, a cylindrical piece of grey stone about two feet long. Its ends are square, and its circumference cut into twelve facets. Round the middle of it is a high band, and there is a device, alternate triangle and square, carried round the twelve facets. This stone, whatever it

was meant for, came from a long distance away, for no such stone can be found for 150 miles round."

**Asāsuni.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated 20 miles (by river) south-east of Sātkhirā at the junction of the Sobnālī and Asāsuni rivers. There is an anchorage place here for boats proceeding eastward while waiting for the tide. The village contains a police station, a Public Works Department bungalow and a large bazar; an annual fair is held during the Dol Jatrā.

**Bāgherhāt.**—Headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated in  $22^{\circ} 40'$  N. and  $89^{\circ} 47'$  E. on the Bhairab, 22 miles (by river) south-east of Khulnā. Population (1901) 1,124. The town was formerly connected with Khulnā by a daily steamer service, but this has been discontinued owing to the silting up of the Alāipur *Khāl*, and has been replaced by a daily service of boats.

There is a masonry *ghat* or landing place on the bank of the river, and opposite this *ghat*, and within 200 yards from it, is a double-storied building which contains both the Subdivisional Officers' residence and court. To the right of the *ghat* is a building erected a few years ago for the courts of the three Munsifs stationed here, and a little beyond it is the *dāk* bungalow. Further on there are a pleaders' library, charitable dispensary, police buildings, sub-jail, mortuary, and the Munsifs' residential quarters. All these buildings, except the courts of the Munsifs, face a metalled road, which runs along the river bank and is the principal road of the station. In front of the sub-jail is a reserved tank, from which the people obtain their drinking water, the water being said to be so good that people come from a distance of four miles by road or river for it. To the left of the landing *ghat* and close to it is a bazar, both sides of which are lined with shops. The bazar is called Madhabganj, after a member of a family of zamindārs residing at Karaparā, a village about 3 miles distant from Bāgherhāt. Here a bi-weekly market is held on Sundays and Wednesdays, when boats come from Morrellganj, Khulnā, and other places, and a brisk trade is carried on in rice, betel-nuts, coconuts, etc. The chief exports are paddy and betel-nuts, most of which go to Calcutta. Two large fairs, lasting for a month, are held in the winter, when merchants and traders come in large numbers to dispose of their goods. The principal educational institution is a High school aided by Government.

Bāgherhāt was made the headquarters of the subdivision in 1863, prior to which date it was only a piece of low jungle land on the banks of the Bhairab, entered on the map simply as

Baghir. It was, however, a place of some local importance at the end of the 18th century. There are some remains, dating back to this period, immediately adjacent to the subdivisional compound, where there is a small space of ground raised a few feet above the level of the surrounding land. Here the remains of brick enclosure walls and the foundations of a small brick building have been found, and at the southern end of the enclosure are two tanks, the largest of which is known as the Nātkhānā, or ball-room tank. In the same enclosure is another old tank, called the Mithā-pukur, on one side of which an old *ghāt* or flight of steps was discovered two feet below the surface, when it was re-excavated in 1868. The steps were worn, but the floor above them, which had ornamental brick work, was in good preservation. These ruins date back to the last half of the 18th century and mark the site of the office, treasury and court of a Muhammadan lady, called the Bahu Begum, who received from the Nawāb of Murshidābād a *jāgīr* in this part of the country, including a 1th share (6 annas) of the Khalifatabād *pargana*, within which Bāgherhāt lies. At the time of the Permanent Settlement Government commuted this grant into a money allowance, which the Begum enjoyed till 1794, when she died and the *jāgīr* lapsed.

The name of the place is also spelt Bāgerhāt, Bāghirhāt and Bāgh-hāt. The origin of the name is not known and is the subject of several theories. One theory is that it is a corruption of Bānkerhāt or the market (*hāt*) at the turn of the river, for the place lies just beyond a bend of the Bhairab, and *bān* means the winding or reach of a river. Others say that the place was formerly surrounded by jungle which was full of tigers (*bāgh*); and an alternative derivation is that a Muhammadan named Bākar established a market here. Another plausible suggestion is that the market was set up in what was once the garden of Khān Jahān (known locally as Khan Jahān Ali or Khānja Ali) who, as related in Chapter II, settled and died here in the 15th century.

In the neighbourhood of Bāgherhāt there are some buildings of considerable archaeological interest erected by Khān Jahān. They are approached by an old road, 12 feet wide and partly laid with bricks, which runs in a westerly direction from the landing *ghāt*. This road is known as Khān Jahān's road, as tradition relates that it was constructed by him. At a distance of 2½ miles along the road are the remains of a small mosque, from which a narrow side-road, also constructed by Khān Jahān and partially laid with bricks, runs southward to his tomb. It passes over an artificial mound, which is believed to have been made from the

earth obtained from a tank, called the Thākūr-dighī, which he excavated. Proceeding a little further on, the ruins of a gateway are met with, passing through which we come to the *dargah* or mausoleum of Khān Jahān.

The mausoleum is a splendid specimen of the solid masonry work of the 15th century, which even the influence of the climate has not been able to affect. It is a solid brick building, 42 feet 8 inches square, covered by a large dome with an ornamental pinnacle at the top; the height of the outside walls to the spring of the dome is 24 feet 2 inches. In the centre is the tomb of Khān Jahān, a stone sarcophagus, resting on a double stone terrace. The latter again stands on a brick terrace, which was ornamented with glazed tiles of various patterns, blue and white being the predominating colours. The floor was also laid out with similar hexagonal tiles, which formed one of the most attractive features of the building. But most of them have been removed, and unfortunately they cannot be replaced, as recent experiments at Gaur have shewn that it is impossible at present to produce glazed tiles to match the old ones. Some well-preserved specimens, however, are in the Indian Museum, and others are placed round the sarcophagus. The custodians of the tomb allege that the damage is due to thieves entering the place at night, and digging into the tomb, in the hope of finding treasure, in spite of the veneration in which the saint is held.

The sarcophagus is covered with a black stone, about 6 feet in length with a rounded top; and the terraces below it have stone slabs over them covered with inscriptions, all pious sentences in Arabic and Persian. On the rounded stone of the sarcophagus there are 104 squares, the first five squares containing an inscription "The God, the only God, who is—"; in the remaining 99 squares are as many epithets of God, such as the Merciful, the Everlasting, the Equitable, etc. Within a triangle on the south side of this stone the following is inscribed—"This tomb is a part of the garden of Heaven for the great Khān, Khān Jahān. God be merciful to him. Written on the 26th Zil Hijjah in the year 863." This date corresponds to the 23rd of October 1459. In the centre of the slab on the south of the terrace supporting this stone there is a square enclosing a circle, which contains the following inscription:—"A poor slave of God, who was old and weak and prayed for mercy, and who was a friend of the descendants of the chief of all the prophets, and also of the learned, an enemy of the infidels, a helper of the Muhammadans, and a defender of Islām, passed out of this world. His name was Alagh Khān Jahān. God be merciful to

him. He left this world for a better one on the night of Wednesday, 26th Zul Hijjah, and was buried on Thursday, the 27th of the same month in the year 863." Another inscription on the south side of the first terrace is—"We begin life in this world by crying; trials and hardships follow, while death ends all"; and there are two verses, of which the following translation has been given by Mr. Sunder:—

"Remember, O friends, death is certain, death is sure.

It is a thorn in the garden.

Death is certain, death is sure.

Death is the greatest enemy of all living things,

And is different from other enemies.

Death is certain, death is sure.

The accursed Satan is your enemy;

He tries to change your faith.

Be careful, be watchful.

Death is certain, death is sure.

In all communities the great forgive the faults of the weak;

And the poet well says—

Death is certain, death is sure."

To the west of the mausoleum is a mosque in which the saint is said to have spent a part of his last years in prayer; and between the two buildings is the tomb of Muhammad Tahir, who is said to have been the *Dewan* or Prime Minister of Khān Jahān. Some pious sentences are inscribed on it, and the following inscription is in Arabic characters.—"This tomb is a part of the garden of Heaven and of a great friend, by name Muhammad Tahir, 863 Zul Hijjah." This Muhammad Tahir was the Brāhman *Dewan* of Khān Jahān and the founder of the sect of Pir Ahis, of whose conversion to Islām an account has been given in Chapter III.

Immediately to the south of Khān Jahān's mausoleum there is a large tank called the Thākur-dighā, because an image of the god Siva is said to have been found in it. The image is now at a village called Sivabāri to the east of Bagherhāt, and one of its arms bears the marks of a cut from a *kodali*. The tank contains a number of crocodiles, which are regularly fed by the *khadims* or custodians of the buildings. They are believed to be the descendants of two crocodiles kept by Khān Jahān, which were called Kālāpār and Dhalāpār, i.e. black side and white side. Tradition says that when Khānja Ali called them by their names, they would come to him from the remotest corner of the tank, and their descendants hear and obey the same call. They are quite tame and will take fowls from the hands of

pilgrims without attacking them. On the north-west side of the Thākūr-dighi there is a building, nearly as large as Khān Jahān's mausoleum, in which a *fakir* named Ahmad Ali, but also called Zindā Fakir, was buried. The latter name, which means the living *fakir*, is explained by a story that, when his body was being put in the tomb, he rose and called out to the mourners to bring his Korān. A mosque adjoining the tomb has been converted into a cow-shed.

The legend connected with these buildings of Khān Jahān is as follows. When Khān Jahān was old and near the end of his days, he asked God where he should go to die and be buried. God pointed out to him this place, and so he came here, erected a mosque and tomb for himself, and dug a tank, as he always did beside his buildings. In excavating this tank he dug very deep indeed, and yet failed to find any water. At last the diggers reached a Hindu temple, into which Khān Jahān entered. He found a devotee sitting inside, whom he asked for water. The devotee at once caused the fountains of the deep to gush forth in such abundance that it was with difficulty that Khān Jahān and the diggers escaped in time to the bank. The devotee's temple is believed still to exist at the bottom of the tank, but it has been seen only by one man, who was cutting the branches of a tree on the edge of the tank. Suddenly he cried out "There is the devotee walking"; and the moment he said so, the branch on which he stood snapped, and he fell down and died. His body was buried close by, within the precincts of the mosque. The legend of the tank is a curious one in one respect; it is a Muhammadan fable, though its subject is Hindu divinity.\* An annual *mela* or fair is held on the grounds near the tomb of Khān Jahān upon the supposed anniversary of his death, the full moon of Chaitra (March-April). On this occasion Muhammadan women assemble in large numbers, and offer fowls to the crocodiles in the tank, in the belief that this offering will procure them offspring.

At a distance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the road to Khān Jahān's tomb, there is another brick-laid road, also ascribed to Khān Jahān, leading to the building called Sāt-gumbaz. Proceeding along it a short distance, we reach a large gateway with a pointed arch, which is still perfect. Between this gateway and the east side of the Sāt-gumbaz, which faces it, are the remains of what was once a courtyard with a masonry floor, where people used to meet and perform their ablutions before entering the Sāt-gumbaz for prayers. The place is now neglected and covered with jungle.

\* J. Westland, *Report on the District of Jowar*, p. 15.



The Sātḡumbaz is a large oblong building built of chiselled bricks. It is 159 feet 8 inches long and 105 feet broad, while its height from the ground to the roof is 21 feet 7 inches. Inside, the length of the building is 143 feet 3 inches, and its breadth is 88 feet, the thickness of the walls on all sides being 8 feet. The roof is composed of 77 domes (eleven rows of seven) supported by arches on sixty pillars below; no less than twenty-one of the domes are more or less damaged, and there are cracks in the walls. The pillars are built of grey stone, and seem originally to have been encased in brick, five of them still having a brick casing. At the four corners of the building are four minarets, 30 feet in circumference and 13 feet above the level of the roof. The two to the east can be climbed by means of winding staircases from the inside of the building, one of them being called the *andha kothā* or dark building and the other the *raushan kothā* or light building. They were obviously intended for the use of the Muazzin, who went up them five times a day to sound the *azān*, i.e., call the people to prayer.

The main entrance is to the east and is flanked by five smaller arched entrances on either side, while the northern and southern walls have each seven similar entrances. Looking straight west from the main entrance into the hall of the building along its central aisle, we face a large stone *mīhrāb*, or prayer niche in the west wall of the structure, in which the *imām* or leader used to stand and lead the prayers. On either side of this *mīhrāb* are five prayer niches, but a small door has been let through one of the latter. The local legend is that thieves dug into the niche and broke it in the hope of finding treasure. There are also twelve small niches in the north wall and twelve in the south wall. The arches of the doorways, and also those in the west wall containing the prayer niches, are ornamented with five small circles or rosettes, one in the centre and four round it (arranged thus ☉), which are believed to represent the arms of the then reigning king of Bengal, Mahmūd Shah, as the coins struck by this sovereign bear similar circles on them.

The name Sātḡumbaz, i.e., the mosque of 60 domes, may be due to the ordinary Indian predilection for round numbers, or it may be a corruption of Sātātṭar-gumbaz, for the building has actually 77 domes and is sometimes called by that name. It has been said that the building was not a mosque, but a *dārbar* hall built by Khān Jahan; but this story deserves as little credit as another tale of his treasure being deposited beneath the floor. The latter belief is, however, prevalent, and thieves have before

now dug into the pillars in the hope of finding treasure. The building was clearly intended to be a mosque. There are the usual prayer niches or *mihirabs* in the back wall to the west, a small door leads through the latter into the interior as in all larger mosques in India, and the style is in every respect that of a mosque, the only peculiarity being the large number of domes covering the roof. As a building it is of inferior workmanship as compared with the tomb of Khān Jahān. It has also suffered much from the effects of time, as well as from the dampness of the climate, and is generally in a bad state of repair. It is, however, a peculiar structure, and it has been decided to preserve it as a partial ruin, so as to show what it was like when complete.

To the north-west of the Sāt-gumbaz there is a very large tank called Ghora-dighi, which was excavated by order of Khān Jahān. He is said to have called it Ghorā-dighi because he made it of the length that a horse ran without being tired. This tank also has a number of black crocodiles, which come to be fed as soon as called, the call being "Come Kalāpār (black side)," and "Come Dhalāpār (white side)." A little to the north of the Sāt-gumbaz there is a small mosque, now in ruins, and alongside it is a tank called the Bis-pukur or poison tank, from which no body will take water. It is said that one of the wives of Khān Jahān, called Sona Bibi, took poison on his death, threw herself into the tank, and was there drowned. The other wife, named Bāghi Bibi, was buried on the west side of the Ghorā-dighi, and a small mosque, which stands near her tomb, is named after her. There are numerous other mosques erected by Khān Jahān and his followers, who are said to have been no less than 360 in number. One of them is of rather large dimensions, with a broad tank facing it, and is said to have been built by one Saadat Khān, a disciple of the warrior saint. The ruins of a brick-built bridge remain to show that the stream which flows past this place, called the Magrā Nadi, was a large river four or five hundred years ago, when it was spanned by a substantial bridge. On the banks of this stream is a landing-place, or rather the ruins of one, designated Pātharer Ghāt.\*

**Bāgherhāt Subdivision.**—Eastern subdivision of the district lying between 21° 44' and 22° 59' N., and between 89° 32' and 89° 58' E., with an area of 679 square miles, excluding the Sunderbans tract. It is bounded on the north by the districts

\* For much of the above information I am indebted to a pamphlet by Mr. D. H. R. Sander.

of Jessore and Faridpur, on the east by the Madhumati, which divides it from Backergunge, on the south by the Bay of Bengal, and on the west by the Khulnā subdivision. Its population was 363,041 in 1901, as against 340,559 in 1891, the density being 535 persons to the square mile. The subdivision contains 1,045 villages, but no towns. Its headquarters are at Bāgherhāt, and the chief trade centres are Morrellganj and Kachua. For administrative purposes it is divided into the thānas of Bāgherhāt, Morrellganj, Mollahāt and Rampāl.

**Bardal**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated on the Kabadak opposite Chāndkhālī. It contains one of the largest markets in the district, a much frequented *haṭ* being held here every Sunday. It has now eclipsed Chāndkhālī on the opposite side of the river, which formerly was the most important marts of the Sundarbans. It is common to find vicissitudes of this kind in the fortunes of neighbouring *haṭs*.

**Chandkhālī.** A village in Khulnā subdivision, situated in thāna Paikgāchā on the Kabadak about 10 miles north of the place where that river enters the Sundarbans. The place is of some historical interest as being one of the first markets set up in the Sundarbans, and also the headquarters of what was practically the first subdivision established in Bengal, both being created by Mr. Henckell, Magistrate of Jessore, at the close of the 18th century. The route from the eastern districts to Calcutta then as now passed by Kachua, Khulnā, Chāndkhālī, and by the river leading past Kāliganj; but this route was south of the cultivated tracts, and for the most part lay through uninhabited forest. In 1785-86, as part of his scheme for the reclamation of the Sundarbans, Mr. Henckell established, for boats passing through this inhospitable tract, three markets, where travellers might meet with traders and obtain provisions. One of these markets was at Chāndkhālī, the other two being at Kachua and Henckellganj. Chāndkhālī also became the seat of a subdivision in 1786, when Mr. Henckell established what he called a "cutcherry of reference" for the trial of claims made by zamindārs in respect to their boundaries. This he placed in charge of Mr. Foster, one of his assistants, who was also directed to take cognizance of civil and criminal matters arising within a radius of 30 miles from Chāndkhālī, except when they were of importance, when he was to refer them to Mr. Henckell himself. The brick building erected by Mr. Henckell to serve as a *kāchhārī* was in existence till 20 years ago, when it fell into the river; and the only memorial of Mr. Henckell now left is a tank attributed to him, whose

antiquity is attested by large banyan trees growing along three of its sides. Thirty years ago Chāndkhālī was still one of the leading marts of the Sundarbans, but it was gradually eclipsed by Saheb's Hāt at Bardal on the other side of the river. The village contains a dispensary opened in 1899, and a cutcherry erected in 1907.

**Chitalmāri.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated on the river Madhumati. It has a bazar of considerable importance, and a large trade in cattle is carried on. It is the site of an annual fair held at the end of March, which lasts for six days and is attended by about 2,000 people daily.

**Chuknagar.**—A village situated in the Dumriā thāna of the Khulnā subdivision. It contains a District Board Inspection bungalow, and a large *hāt* is held twice a week. An annual fair takes place here in November or December after the Dumriā fair.

**Damrail.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the left bank of the river Kalindi, a few miles north-west of Iswaripur. It contains a temple called the Navaratna, which must once have been a fine structure. It is now, however, in ruins, and of the nine *chūras* or pinnacles which crowned it, eight have fallen down and only the central one, which was the biggest, is left. Its top is overgrown with jungle, but little damage has been done to the side walls, which are of solid masonry. The building has a circular room in the centre, the vault over which carries the highest pinnacle. On the four corners of this room there are four side rooms, which are enclosed within four outer walls. The four inner walls run parallel to the four outer ones and separate the central room from the side rooms. Over each of the four corners of the inner and outer walls there was a pinnacle, which, with the one over the central vault, made up the nine *chūras*. The outer walls are engraved with figures of Hindu gods and goddesses. On the western wall there is an inscription, which is now so much effaced that only a few words can be read with great difficulty.

The Navaratna is said to have been built by Rāja Bikramāditya, the father of Pratāpāditya, some time during the third quarter of the 16th century. There is no idol within the Navaratna, and it is believed that the building was never dedicated to a god or goddess and never contained any image. It is said to have been built for a different object, viz., as a *samaj-mandir*. When Bikramāditya established himself in Khulnā, he induced many Brāhmins and Kāyasthas of respectable families to come from various parts of Bengal and settle near his capital.

He established a *samāj* or assembly for the guidance of his subjects in social matters and styled himself its head. The assembly consisted of nine men, who, like the nine sages in the court of Mahārāja Bikramāditya of Ujjain, were called *navaratna*, or nine gems, and it was in the *samāj-mandir* that they used to meet for consultation. The name Navaratna is said to commemorate the fact that it was their meeting place; but the designation is a common one for Bengali temples with nine towers or pinnacles.

**Daulatpur.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated 5 miles north of Khulnā. Population (1901) 808. It contains a station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, a *tahsil kachhāri* of the Saiyadpur Trust estate, a charitable dispensary (opened in 1866), a High English school, and an Arts college established a few years ago, which is called the Daulatpur Hindu Academy. A large trade in betel-nuts, molasses, jute and timber is carried on here.

**Debhātā.**—A town in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the Jamunā river, 8 miles north-east of Kāliganj. Population (1901) 5,454. It was constituted a municipality in 1876, and the area within municipal limits is 3.3 square miles. The town contains a police outpost and a dispensary opened in 1907. There is a local trade in *sundri* wood, and lime is manufactured from shells.

**Dhūmghāt.**—An old capital of Rājā Pratāpāditya, the site of which is disputed. The place now known as Dhūmghāt is situated in Sundarbans lot No. 165, about 3 miles from Iswaripur. It is a big stretch of swampy paddy fields, with groups of cultivators' huts scattered here and there, and though it contains an old tank, there is no trace of any ruins.\* The general consensus of opinion is that this was not the old Dhūmghāt. According to some, the site of that city is now occupied by the village of Bansipur, 2 or 3 miles distant from Iswaripur, where there are some remains of old masonry structures. According to others, Dhūmghāt was in Sundarbans lot No. 169, which is a Government reserve forest, known locally as the Tirkāti jungle, about 10 or 12 miles from Iswaripur. The remains reported to be still extant at this place are some old masonry ruins, including a dilapidated *maṭh*, about 25 feet high, resembling a temple in architecture, a tank, the remains of a *pākā* road, and several garden trees, which do not ordinarily grow in the Sundarbans, such as *bakul*, *gab*, etc.\*

\* I am indebted to Bibe Chāra Chatterji, Subdivisional Officer of Sātkhirā, for the above information.

**Dumriā or Dumuriā.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated 21 miles (by river) east of Khulnā. Population (1901). 3,847. It is the headquarters of a thāna, and also contains a sub-registry office and a dispensary opened in 1904, which is called the Satish Chandra Mukherji dispensary after a former Collector. An extensive trade is carried on in rice and sugar, and also in boats, which are built here. A fair is held during the Rājātrā festival in October or November.

**Fakirhāt.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated nearly half way between Khulnā and Bāgherhāt. It contains a police outpost and inspection bungalow, but was formerly of much more importance than at present. It has still a large bazar, however, and carries on a considerable trade in rice, betel-nuts, coconuts and sugar. The land at Fakirhāt is exceptionally high for the Sundarbans, and grows date trees, to a certain extent. Sugar is manufactured from the produce of these trees, and also from molasses (*gur*) imported from other districts.

**Gopālpur.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated 3 miles from Iswaripur. It contains a temple said to have been one of four erected by Pratāpāditya. These temples stood at right angles to each other, enclosing a rectangular space on the right bank of the river Jamunā, which has now silted up. Those on the southern, western and northern sides have fallen down and are a heap of ruins, and the one on the eastern side is the only one now standing, but the upper storey even of this temple has fallen down. The lower storey is in the form of an oblong, with a staircase inside; and the walls are engraved with images of Hindu gods and goddesses. There was a *Dol-mantir* in front of the temple, which has also fallen down. Altogether, the temple is in a very dilapidated condition; it is overgrown with jungle and is the haunt of bats and wild pig. The idol of Gobinda said to have been brought by Pratāpāditya from Puri, was formerly enshrined in the upper storey, but it was removed over a hundred years ago and is now in the house of the *adhi-kari* or hereditary priest at Raipur. Once a year, at the time of the Dol festival in February, it is taken to village Nunnagar, which contains the residence of some descendants of Pratāpāditya, who hold a high social position among the Bhangaj Kāyasths of Bengal. At a short distance from the temple there is a big tank about 100 *bighās* in area, which, according to tradition, was dug by Pratāpāditya. It was apparently a magnificent sheet of water at one time, but at present is overgrown with weeds.

**Iswaripur.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated 12½ miles south of Kāliganj on the Jamunā river, close to its

junction with the Ichhāmatī. Population (1901) 362. Historically, Iswaripur is one of the most interesting places in the district, for it was the capital of Bikramāditya in the latter half of the 16th century. It was also known as Yasohara, a name which means either supremely glorious or the depriver of glory, the legend being that the treasure taken here from Gaur by Bikramāditya was so great, that thenceforth that great city was eclipsed by the city in the Sundarbans. The latter name, abbreviated to Jator, was extended to the adjoining country, and was eventually given to the present town of Jessore. The former name is said to be due to the fact that Pratāpāditya, the son of Bikramāditya, built here a great temple dedicated to Kālī; and there is still a temple in the village, called the temple of Jasoreswari, which contains an image of the goddess.

The most important remains extant are an old fort and the buildings known as the Tenga Masjid, Hāfizkhāna and Barādwarī. The fort is a large enclosure surrounded by immense embankments, a little south of the junction of the Jamunā and Ichhāmatī. Some say that it was a tank, but this theory is improbable, for there are no less than sixteen tanks round about the enclosure, and a further supply of water could not have been necessary. Whether tank or fort, its former glory has departed, for the cultivator has turned up the soil and planted it with paddy. Practically the only remains are a moat connected with the old channel of the Jamuna river and high mud ramparts enclosing a large quadrangular space. The ramparts now serve as house-sites and gardens, and the enclosed space as rice fields. Stone balls, sometimes covered with iron plates, are found now and then by cultivators in the fields, and in one part of the ramparts heaps of refuse iron are met with, which indicate that something like an iron foundry may have existed and confirm the local tradition that guns were made here. South of this fort is a large mosque called Tenga Masjid. It is built of solid masonry, and is 140 feet in length by 35 feet broad, the height of the domes, of which there are five, measured on the inside, being 35 feet. The building appears to have sunk a good deal, and the domes are cracked, but it is still an imposing structure and is used regularly as a mosque by the local Muhammadans.

On the north-east of the fort are the remains of a building called Barādwarī, which is said to have been Pratāpāditya's hall of audience. In front of it is a tank which must formerly have been a fine sheet of water. Another building is called



the Hāfizkhānā or jail. This also was a fine brick building, and the roof is still intact in spite of the neglect of centuries and the ravages of the damp climate. Tradition says that it was originally three stories high, and that two have now sunk below the surface of the ground. The name Hāfizkhānā appears to be a misnomer, for the building is obviously a *hamāmkhānā* or bath. There are marks of pipes passing through the walls, and reservoirs for water, which clearly show that it could not be anything else but a Turkish bath. South-east of the fort are the ruins of what is generally believed to have been the palace of the Rājā. Now there is only a high homestead site, called the *Rāphari-bhita* by the villagers, with remains of old bricks and a long compound wall along the village road.

At a little distance to the east of Tenga Masjid, the Rājā's tutelary deity, the goddess Kālī, is enshrined in a building that has been kept in good repair. In former times, it is said, she looked southward and the lands on the south were cleared; but the Rājā offended her, and one day when he went to prostrate himself before her, she turned her face in displeasure to the west. Hence the lands on the west are still clear, but on the south they have been under jungle ever since the goddess turned from Pratāpāditya and his glory departed. The shrine is not a temple of the usual shape, but a rectangular building, like an ordinary *pūjā bāri*, with a spacious quadrangle in front, enclosed by long rows of rooms, one of which is double-storied. None of these buildings are ancient, having been erected about 100 years ago by the *adhikāris* or priests of Jasoreswari. There are two tablets, one in Sanskrit and another in the vernacular, to this effect. The tradition is that the present shrine remained without a roof till the piece of iron that was on the top of the original temple was found among the ruins and removed to it. The site of the ancient temple of Jasoreswari is pointed out at a short distance from the present building. Here remains of old masonry work are still visible.

There are a few minor remains in and about the village. At a short distance from the Tenga mosque is a small rectangular building now overgrown with jungle, which is said to have been a temple of Siva erected by Mān Singh after the defeat of Pratāpāditya. In front of the mosque are some hollows covered with ruins, which, according to some, are the graves of Muhammadan generals defeated by Pratāpāditya, while others declare that they mark the site of underground magazines. Another high mound, now overgrown with trees and strewn with brick remains, commands an old channel of the Jamuna.



The Iohhāmāti, which nearly surrounds the old town of Jasor Iswaripur, was once a large flowing stream. It is so represented in Rennell's atlas, but it has now silted up towards the north and is impassable for any but small boats. South and east of Iswaripur are the debris of old buildings, and the place is called Tirkāti. On the opposite side of the Iohhāmāti a large area is strewn over with bricks and the foundations of old buildings. This place goes by the name of Tezkāti. These names were probably given with reference to the rapidity with which the clearings were effected. *Tir* signifies an arrow, and *tes* means swift; and the names would mean cut with the speed of an arrow and cut quickly.\*

**Jātrāpur.**—A village and market in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated midway between Fakirhāt and Bāgherhāt. The village is of considerable size and has an extensive trade in betel-nuts and coconuts. It is chiefly notable for a large temple of the Vaishnava sect dedicated to Gopāl, which was erected about three generations ago, by a Vaishnava Bābāji named Ballabh Dās. The wealth which he employed to raise and endow the temple was acquired by begging; but his followers attribute to him miraculous powers, because after coming to the country a penniless beggar, he managed to build a fine temple to his god. To this temple of Gopāl, therefore, a new temple has been added, dedicated to the Bābāji, which was built by his followers upon the spot where he was buried. The temples are frequently visited by pilgrims, who make journeys of even three to four days in order to visit them.

**Kachnā.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated at the junction of the Bhairab and Madhumāti rivers, about 6 miles east of Bāgherhāt. It contains a police outpost, a sub-registry office and a considerable bazar. It owes its foundation to Mr. Henckell, being one of the three market-places which, as related in Chapter II, were established in the Sundarbans by him towards the close of the 18th century. A creek or *kīdāl* divides the village into two parts, and is crossed by a masonry bridge, built, according to a rude inscription, by one Bansi Kundu, who also erected a small temple close by. Large quantities of *kachnā*, a kind of yam, are grown here, from which circumstance the village probably derives its name.

**Kālārā.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the Betnā, 12 miles north of Sātkhirā. It contains a police

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\* *Antiquities of the Sundarbans*, Statistical Reporter, 1876. I am also indebted to Bāba Chāru Chandra Chatterji, Subdivisional Officer of Sātkhirā, for information regarding the remains at Iswaripur.

station, sub-registry office, inspection bungalow, and a dispensary, which was established in 1896. It has a fairly large bazar, the principal trade being in molasses, sugar and rice. Kalāroā was formerly a municipality, but ceased to be so before the formation of the district.

**Kāliganj.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the Kankaiāli river, 32 miles (by river) south-west from Sātkhirā. The Jamunā used to flow by the village, but the channel to the south has silted up. It contains a police station, sub-registry office, inspection bungalow, and a dispensary, which was opened in 1897 and is known as the Vincent dispensary after a former Collector. The village lies on the boat route between Calcutta and Eastern Bengal, and has a large bazar and a considerable local trade. It is also noted for its manufacture of earthenware pottery, cutlery and articles made of horn. It was formerly the headquarters of a municipal union of villages.

**Kapilmuni.**—A village in the Khulna subdivision situated 6 miles south of Tala on the banks of the Kabadak river; it is connected with Jhingergacha railway station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway by a steamer service. It has a fairly large bazar, and a market is held twice a week on Sundays and Thursdays. It is not a place of any considerable trade, but it is the headquarters of three zamindari *tahsils*, and a large fair (*melā*) is annually held here, which lasts for 13 days and is attended by 6,000 to 7,000 people. The place derives its name from a Hindu sage (*muni*) named Kapil, who is said to have taken up his abode here in ancient times, probably when it was still a dense forest, and to have established the worship of the goddess Kapileswari. This sage is not the great Kapil, who, according to Hindu mythology, destroyed the sons of Sagar; and beyond the fact that he was a devotee who installed the idol of his goddess, nothing is known of him. His memory is still preserved however by the annual *melā* above referred to, which is held on Baruni day in March, as that, it is said, was the day on which Kapil's prayers were accepted in heaven. The *melā* is a great bathing festival, for, according to local belief, the Kabadak at this place, and for that day, acquires the sanctity of the Ganges, a result due to the virtue of Kapilmuni or Kapileswari. The old temple of Kapileswari fell down long ago, and a new one built about 1850 by the lessee of the place, Mr. Mackenzie of Jhingergacha, shared the same fate, being demolished by the cyclone of 1867. The goddess is at present enshrined in a thatched hut. The village also contains the tomb of a Muhammadan

saint Jāfar Ali, which is a place of pilgrimage for devout Musalmāns. It is covered with a thatched roof and is in charge of some *fakirs*, who have grants of land for its support.

As regards the history of the place and of other ruins in the neighbourhood, the following extract is quoted from Sir James Westland's Report:—"More about Kapilmuni is not known, and the absence of tradition is probably due to the fact that these places have not been continuously inhabited, except in modern times. When, a hundred years ago, advancing civilisation reached this point, the place and the sage were new to the new settlers, and they have handed down to their posterity only the little tradition they picked up themselves.

"In some other ruins near here there is evidence of this want of continuity of habitation. At a place called Agrā, a mile away, there are two or three mounds. One of these has been excavated and found to cover some ancient brick houses, the walls and windows of which are easily seen by descending into the excavation. There is not a doubt that the other mounds contain the same sort of ruins. I am informed that these mounds exist not only here, but at intervals all the way between Talā on the north and Chāndkhālī on the south, a distance of some fourteen miles. How old these mounds are, and when the houses they cover were inhabited, it is impossible to say. The house I saw was only about the size of a well-to-do husbandman's dwelling; but for all I know, there may be some larger. There are some hollows, the apparent remains of tanks that once existed near the houses, but there is no mark of wall or ditch round the mounds, that I examined. Of the inhabitants of the dwellings that once existed here, there is at present not even a tradition. They were not unlikely some ancient settlers in the place, who had disappeared with all their work before the present race came into this part of the land. The present race dates from about a hundred years back, and the older race must therefore have dwelt in the place and disappeared long before that."

**Katipārā**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision situated 10 miles north of Chāndkhālī on the Kabadak. This village appears to have been one of the early outposts of advancing reclamation. The leading family in it is a Kāyasth family of Ghosea, who migrated here from Khalishākhālī to the north-west about a hundred years ago, or at least at a time when the land was mostly jungle. This family brought to the village other Kāyasth families, with which they intermarried, and there is now a large Kāyasth community. The rest of the inhabitants are engaged in cultivation either in the vicinity or in the Sunderbans. The

village is a good specimen of a village, for the houses are for the most part well kept, and the village roads are wide and are maintained in fair order.

**Khulnā.**—Headquarters of the district, situated at the point where the Bhairab river meets the Sundarbans in 22° 49' N. and 89° 34' E. Khulnā may be described as the capital of the Sundarbans and has been for more than 100 years a place of commercial importance. It was the headquarters of the Raimangal Agency of the Salt Department during the period of the East India Company's salt manufacture in the Sundarbans, the offices being apparently at Baghmārā on the east of the Rūpsā opposite the civil station. It is the only place in the district containing a thāna existing from before the Permanent Settlement, for it was the site of thāna Nawābād (meaning the new clearance), which is known to have been in existence in 1781 and has continued, with a change of name, up to the present time. In 1842 Khulna was made the headquarters of a subdivision, the first established in Bengal under the present system. "Its chief object", according to Sir James Westland, "was to hold in check Mr Rainey, who had purchased a zamindāri in the vicinity and resided at Nihalpur, and who did not seem inclined to acknowledge the restraints of law." The first Subdivisional Officer was Mr. Shore, whose jurisdiction extended over not only the Khulnā subdivision, but also over almost the whole of the Bāgherhāt subdivision. Subsequently, in 1882, it was made the headquarters of the newly created district.

- Khulnā is the chief centre for the Sundarbans trade, for not only is it the terminus of the central section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, but all the great river routes converge on the town. It is connected by steamer with Nārāyanganj, Barisal, Mādāripur, Muhammadpur, Narail and Binodpur, and all the boat traffic from and to the east passes through it. Apart, moreover, from this through traffic, Khulnā is a large forwarding mart. Rice, sugar, betel-nuts and coconuts, the produce of the vicinity, are collected for exportation and the trade in salt is also considerable. The railway station is being gradually extended so as to accommodate a large number of goods-sheds in order to deal with goods traffic on the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

The town itself has few features of interest. It contains the usual civil, criminal and revenue courts and offices found in the headquarters of a district, the office of the Divisional Officer of the Sundarbans Forest Division, the district jail, a circuit house, a dāk bungalow, and a hospital erected in 1901

and called the Woodburn Hospital after the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir John Woodburn, K. C. S. I. A zemāna cottage ward named after Mrs Collin, the wife of the Commissioner of the Division, has also recently been opened. Among educational institutions may be mentioned a Government Entrance school, a girls' school, named after Dr. K. J. Ghose, formerly Civil Medical Officer of the district, the Khulnā Coronation Technical school and a Middle English school. There are also a Coronation Hall, a Town Hall and a public library located in the same building. In the heart of the town there is a large reserved tank, which supplies the town with drinking water. The town is fortunate in having a supply of filtered water, the water works providing 15,000 gallons per diem delivered into 5 reservoirs. The water is raised from the reserved tank into two sand filters, by means of a pulsometer pump, in 6 hours. It then goes through pipes to the distributing reservoirs, from which the people draw their water. The works were opened in 1906. Close to the railway station, and adjoining the Jessore road, there is another large tank named after the first district Magistrate of Khulna, Mr. Clay. The bazar is called the Saheber Bazar after a Mr. Challett, who had an indigo factory close by more than half a century ago. The place was formerly called Charliganj after the same gentleman, but the name has fallen into disuse. The population of the town, according to the census of 1901, is 10,426, and the area within municipal limits is 4.64 square miles comprising the villages of Khulna, Baniakhamār, Tutpārā, Baira and Shibbāti.

Local tradition states that the town is called after Khullānā, a heroine of Hindu mythology, to whom an interesting legend attaches. It is said that Chandi, another form of Durga or Kali, was anxious to extend her worship on earth, and for this purpose had a celestial nymph named Ratnamālā born as a mortal, promising to watch over her while she devoted herself to the task laid upon her. Ratnamālā was born as Khullānā, and in due time became the second wife of a rich merchant of Ujjain, named Dhanapati Saudāgar. The first wife, Lahanā, was somewhat of a termagant, and during the absence of Dhanapati forced Khullānā to tend the family goats. This she did, until Chandi, taking pity on her, appeared in a vision to Dhanapati and told him to return. Further trouble followed when Dhanapati performed the annual *śrāddha* of his father and his castemen were assembled together. They refused to take food in his house because his wife had been a herdsman wandering in the jungle. But Khullānā got him out of the difficulty by successfully undergoing

various ordeals to prove her fidelity. Dhanapati after this went to Ceylon in pursuit of his merchant's calling, and on the way his disrespect for Chandī was punished by a storm in which all his ships but one sunk, and when he reached Ceylon he was imprisoned. In the meantime, Khullānā gave birth to a son named Srimanta, who was really a celestial musician, named Mālākar, born in human form. The latter, when he attained manhood, went in search of his father, and rescued him from captivity. In the end, the allotted time of Ratnamalā and Malakar on earth having ended, they ascended to heaven in a celestial car.

Local tradition asserts that Khullānā dedicated to Kālī a shrine called the temple of Khullāneswari on the bank of the river Bharrab at Tālimpur about a mile to the east of the present town of Khulnā. From this circumstance the town, which is situated at the junction of the rivers Rūpsā and Bhairab, derived its name; for it was formerly connected with Tālimpur, the Rūpsā, which now separates the two places, being even a century ago a small *khal* or creek which could be easily forded. There is still a temple of Khullāneswari, but the present temple is a modern one, built after the original site had been washed away by the river about the year 1880. The original home of Khullānā is said to have been at Kapilmuni, a village on the river Kabadak about 37 miles to the south west of Khulna, near which are a bridge and a *khal* called Khullānā bridge and Khullānā *khal*.

**Khulnā Subdivision.**—Headquarters subdivision of the district, lying between  $21^{\circ} 41'$  and  $25^{\circ} 1'$  N and between  $89^{\circ} 14'$  and  $89^{\circ} 15'$  E. It extends over 619 square miles, excluding the Sunderbans tract, and is bounded on the north by Jessore, on the west of the Satkhira subdivision, on the south by the Bay of Bengal, and on the east by the Bāgherhat subdivision, from which it is separated by the Atharabanka, Rūpsā, Passur and Marjata rivers. Its population was 401,785 in 1901, as against 341,493 in 1891, its density being 619 persons to the square mile. It contains one town Khulna, its headquarters, and 929 villages. Khulna is the chief centre of trade, but Alāipur, Daulatpur, Dumriā, Phultalā and Kapilmuni are also important marts. The subdivision, which was constituted in 1842, was the first established in Bengal and formerly included almost the whole of the present Bāgherhat subdivision. For administrative purposes it is divided into four *thanas*, viz., Khulnā, Baitaghātā, Dumriā, and Paikgāchā, and two outposts at Phultalā and Dakupi; the latter have been declared *thanas* for purposes of investigation.

**Labsā.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated about 10 miles from Sātkhirā, on the right bank of the river Betnā. The population is chiefly Muhammadan, and includes some families held in great respect by the Muhammadan community. The village is better known for a mausoleum called Mai Champa *Dargāh*, a strong masonry structure crowned by a big dome, in the centre of which is the tomb of Mai Champa or Champa Bībī. The *dargāh* is regarded as a place of much sanctity and is visited by a large number of Muhammadans and Hindus from the neighbourhood. There are several traditions current as to its origin. The most popular version is that Champa Bībī was a virgin saint belonging to the house of the Khalifa of Baghdad, who came to India, over a century ago, to propagate the faith of Islam. After visiting different parts of the country, she came to Bengal and was wrecked off Labsā, while passing in a boat down the Naukhali river, which was then one of the many channels forming the delta of the Sundarbans, but has now entirely silted up. Champa Bībī and her disciples escaped, but after this unpleasant experience, she settled in this village, where she lived the life of a devotee and eventually died. After her death her disciples erected the mausoleum now standing. It is somewhat curious that a virgin lady should be called "Mai," and both "Mai" and "Champa" are Hindu words which would scarcely be applied to a lady from Baghdad.

Another version is that some hundred years ago a holy *fakir*, who had great influence with the Muhammadan rulers of the country, lived here. A neighbouring Hindu Rājā having fallen into disfavour with the latter, sought the assistance of the *fakir*, and in return for his help promised to comply with any request he might make. Some time after this, when the Rājā celebrated the marriage of his only daughter, a girl of rare beauty and accomplishments, the *fakir* appeared and to the horror of the Rājā reminded him of his promise and demanded the hand of the princess. The Rājā and his people having failed to dissuade the *fakir*, at last took up arms; and in the fighting that ensued between the Hindus and the disciples of the *fakir*, the Rājā perished with all his family except the princess. The *fakir* then took her and married her according to the rites of his faith, and died shortly after. The princess, who was named Champa Bībī, passed the remainder of her life as a Muhammadan devotee; and on her death this tomb was erected by the large circle of disciples who had gathered round her.

**Māgura.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the river Kabadak, 16 miles (by road) east of Sātkhirā. It contains a police station and a sub-registry office.



**Mansā.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated on the Mansā and Alāipur Canal. It was formerly an important centre of the trade in rice and jute, but it is on the decline owing to the silting up of the canal, along which large boats with cargo can now only pass at high tide. Formerly this canal was the shortest and most important boat route between Eastern Bengal and Calcutta, and hundreds of big country boats laden with rice, jute, etc., used to pass daily along it; but now there is hardly depth of water enough for big country boats, except during the rainy season and at flood tide, though it has been re-excavated. The village contains an inspection bungalow of the Public Works Department and a temple of Kālī, which is visited by numbers of pilgrims.

**Masjidkur.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated on the Kabadak river, 6 miles south of Chāndkhali. The village derives its name from the fact that when the pioneers of cultivation in the Sundarbans were clearing jungle here, they came upon an old mosque close to the river bank and therefore called the place Masjidkur, i.e., the digging out of the mosque. "The building thus found," writes Sir James Westland, "proclaims at the first glance that it owes its origin to the same hand which built the Sāt-gumbaz. The principle of structure is the same, only instead of a breadth of eleven domes and a depth of seven, we have here a breadth and depth of three domes only, or nine in all. There are the same massive walls, for they are about six feet thick; a large central doorway is beneath the middle dome on each side, and two smaller doorways on each face, one on each side of the central one. But the building itself appears to the eye of so massive a structure, that the doorways seem dwarfed out of all proportion to the size of the face. As in the Sāt-gumbaz, so here also there are four towers at the four corners of the buildings, but none of them appear to be ascendible; and the walls show in several places the same little circlets traced on the face of the brick which are used to ornament the larger structure near Baghahat." These circlets represent the arms of Mahmūd Shah, king of Bengal in the latter half of the 15th century. The roof is supported by four pillars and there are three *mihrabs* or prayer niches on the western wall. One of the pillars has a smooth polish about half way up, which, enquiry shews, is due to its being constantly rubbed from superstitious motives. The pillars are made of stone and, like the Sāt-gumbaz pillars, are formed by placing two or three long stones perpendicularly in line, but they show none of the same regularity. Instead of rising out of the ground upon symmetrical bases, they rest



upon one or two similar long stones laid horizontally upon the ground, without regularity, and not even at the same height. Most of the stones are of the same grey stone as at the Sātgumbaz, but there are one or two of a redder colour, and one or two speckled stones among them. It seems certain that these stones were not brought here or fashioned for the purpose they at present fulfil. They belonged to some other structure, and they were taken from it, or from its ruins, to form pillars in this mosque. The mosque is still used as a place of worship.

**Mollahāt.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated 5 miles from the Māniklaha steamer station of the Khulnā-Nārāyanganj Mail Service. It contains a police station, a sub-registry office and a dispensary opened in 1898.

**Morrellganj.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated on the Panguchi 2½ miles above its confluence with the Baleswar or Haringhāt. It owes its foundation to Messrs. Morrell, who purchased the estate, then a dense forest, in 1849. The neighbourhood was quickly converted from jungle into a prosperous rice-growing tract, and on the banks of the river they established a market town called after themselves Morrellganj. Formerly the village was known as Sarāliya. Here they built a good brick house for themselves, and as the mart soon became the most important in this part of the country, a police station, sub-registry office and dispensary were located there. On the death of Mr. Robert Morrell the management deteriorated, and the estate was sold to Mahārājā Durga Charan Law, C.I.E.

The change effected before the sale of the estate is described as follows by Sir James Westland in his Report on Jessore (1874):—“Where thirty years ago there were miles of impenetrable jungle coming down to the water's edge and forbidding all access to the land, the country is now covered with rice fields and dotted with prosperous villages, with Morrellganj in the middle of all, a busy place of trade, and becoming more and more important every day. The whole work is due to the Messrs. Morrell, who, beginning with small beginnings, have now extended, and are still continuing to extend, their cultivation over a wide area. Their residence, which, in such unsure foundationless ground, it took some years of patient labour to erect, stands on the bank of the river at Morrellganj, which of course is named after them; and half a mile north of it, at the confluence of three rivers and a *kād* besides, is the village and bazar of Morrellganj. Morrellganj has thus a great advantage in its position; for not only is it the natural centre of all the country round it, but it also lies directly upon the route by which most of the produce of the

eastern districts finds its way to Calcutta. The deep channel of the Pánguchi river affords a harbour for sea-going vessels, which now can reach it by the Baleswar river. The Messrs. Morrell have had the place declared a port, and more than one vessel has already taken cargo from it. So great are the natural advantages of the situation, that I feel sure there is a great future in store for the place."

These hopes have not been fulfilled, for though in 1869 the river here was declared a port by the Government of Bengal, and buoys were laid down, the efforts to make it an entrepôt for sea-going trade were not attended with success. Still the position of Morrellganj on a fine navigable river, commanding a rich rice country, renders the place a centre of local trade, and it is an important steamer station of the Cāchar-Sundarbans service. The river, which is tidal, is about a quarter of mile broad here, with deep water from bank to bank. The village has a population, according to the census of 1901, of 972 persons, and contains a police station, sub-registry office and a dispensary, which is maintained by Mahārāj Kumār Rishi Kesh Law.

**Nawapārā Manighar.**--A village in the Kalarōā thāna of the Sātikhīra subdivision. It contains the remains of a mud-built fort or rampart and entrenchment, and several large and small tanks, attributed to a Rājā who was originally a fisherman of the Tiyar caste. Legend relates that, once upon a time, while he was plying his fishing-boat, a hermit or Saunyasī asked him to take him across a *biṭ* or a large sheet of water. The fisherman consented, and when they were in mid-stream, something in the holy man's *pholā* or wallet came into contact with an iron part of the boat, and at once turned it into gold. The Tiyar fisherman, seeing that the wallet of the Saunyasī contained the *paraspāthar*, snatched it away from the hermit, and threw him overboard into the channel. While the holy man was being cast into the water, however, he cursed his murderer, foretelling that he too would die the same death with his whole family and that his line would become extinct. This was a terrible curse, for to die without children is the greatest calamity that can befall a Hindu. The Tiyar became a great Rājā. The revenue, which he used to receive from his tenants, consisted of old ploughs, spades, scythes and sickles, all of iron, which he used to convert into pure gold. He had a large family, and built a fort and entrenchments, and excavated 126 tanks. After enjoying his power for a short time, he was summoned by the Nawāb to give an account of his conduct. Fearing that he might be killed for his misdeeds and his family dishonoured, he took a pair of

carrier-pigeons telling his family that, if he let the pigeons fly homewards, it would be a sure sign of his death and of their disgrace. The Rājā was honourably acquitted, but, while he was riding home, the pigeons escaped. His wife and children, on seeing them, rushed into a boat, and having closed the cabin, and made a hole in the bottom, drowned themselves. The Rājā, who arrived soon after, also drowned himself, and the curse of the hermit was thus fulfilled. The tank in which they were drowned is called *bara-pukur*, i.e., the big tank.

The village is also called Garhdāni, i.e., an elevated place containing a *garh* or fort, *dāni* or *dānā* meaning an elevated place. The particular spot containing the fort is sometimes called Dāna-Manighar or Dhanpotār Dānā, a term implying buried treasure. It is said that until lately no two ploughmen could be seen ploughing together where the Tiyar Rājā's fort is situated, lest there should be a quarrel about the unearthed treasure which is believed to exist there.\*

**Paikgāchā.**—A village in the Khulna subdivision, situated on the boat route of the Calcutta and Eastern Canals, 34 miles south-west of Khulnā. It contains a police station, a sub-registry office and a dispensary opened in 1907.

**Pātkelghātā.**—A village in the Sātkhirā subdivision, situated on the river Kabadak, 7 miles north-east of Sātkhirā. It contains a District Board bungalow and has a large market, the principal trade being in sugar. Opposite Pātkelghātā on the other side of the river is a large village called Kumuriā, which is at present in a deserted condition, but was at one time a great seat of learning, inhabited by many high caste Brāhmins and Kāyasths. It is claimed, indeed, that it ranked second only to Nabadwip in this respect.

**Phultalā.**—A village and police outpost in the Khulnā subdivision, situated 11 miles north of Khulnā on the bank of the Bhairab. Population (1901) 3,911. It has a brisk sugar manufacture and contains a large bazar, with an extensive trade in rice, betel leaves, etc., especially in the former, which is imported from Nalchiti in Backergunge. Phultalā is a station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and is also connected with Khulnā and Jessore by a good road, known as the Jessore road. Near Phultalā there are several villages containing families of Pirali Brāhmins. There is an inspection bungalow at Sikirhāt, 3 miles from the railway station.

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\* The above account is derived from an article *The tradition of the Tiger Raja* by Manvi Abdul Wali, published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part III, 1899.

**Rāmpāl.**—A village in the Bāgherhāt subdivision, situated 16 miles south of Bāgherhāt. It contains a police station, a sub-registry office and a dispensary opened in 1906.

**Saiyadpur Trust Estate.**—An estate extending over 262 square miles in the Khulnā and Jessore districts, so called because it consists chiefly of a four-annas share in *pargana* Saiyadpur. For the same reason it is also known as the "Chārāni" estate. Another name is the Mahal-i-Wakf, but the official name is the Saiyadpur Trust Estate.

The history of this estate is an interesting one. In the 18th century it formed part of the estate of the Rājās of Jessore or Chānchrā, which was divided into two shares, one comprising three-fourths (twelve annas) and the other a fourth (four annas) of the property. The latter fell to the lot of Rājā Syām Sundar Rai, who died without heirs in 1758. About this time the East India Company received from the Nawāb of Murshidābād a grant of land near Calcutta, and one of the zamindārs whom he dispossessed in order to make the grant was a Mughal of his court named Salah-ud-din Khan. The latter, representing that Syām Sundar had left no heirs to his property, requested that it might be made over to him in requital for the loss of his own land, and the Nawāb thereupon granted him the four-annas estate. When the Permanent Settlement was concluded, it was in the possession of his widow, Manu Jan Begam, a good business woman who brought it in safety through the critical period succeeding that settlement, and saved it from the dangers which overwhelmed other zamindaris. On her death in 1803, Hājī Muhammad Mohsin succeeded as her half-brother and sole heir.

In 1806 Hājī Muhammad Mohsin, who had no heirs, executed a *taulatnāmā* or deed of appropriation of his properties, by which what is known as the Mohsin Fund was created. In this deed it is recited that in the testator's family from generation to generation certain charges had been incurred and usages observed in connection with the celebration of religious rites and festivals, and that, as he had no children by whom the performance of these pious duties could be performed, he desired to make provision for their continued discharge. He therefore made over specified property to two managers, with instructions that they should divide the net income into nine equal shares, two of which they should keep for their own use, three they should devote to the expenses of celebrating religious festivals and executing repairs in the Imāmbārā and burial-ground, while the remaining four shares should be spent in paying salaries and pensions, according to a list attached. The bequest included the following properties:—

the *zamindari* of *pargana* Kismat Saiyadpur and Sobnāli, with the Imāmbārā building and the Imāmbārā bazar and *hāt* at Hooghly and the furniture of the Imāmbārā.

It appears from the proceedings of the Vice-President in Council, Persian Department, dated the 8th December 1826, and from the correspondence generally, that these salaries and pensions were payable to the officers and servants of the Imāmbārā, so that the whole endowment, as far as its purpose was specified, was for the support of that religious institution, with the ceremonies performed in it, and the persons employed in it. The founder added the provision that "the managers after me will exercise their discretion and authority either to continue or discontinue them (the allowances and pensions) as they may think proper, and I have made over the management generally to them." No specific direction however was given as to what use should be made of any savings which might accrue from the discontinuance of salaries or pensions under the power given by this last clause, the matter being thus left to the discretion of the managers. A year before the execution of this deed a suit had been instituted against Hājī Muhammad Mohsin by Mirza Bundah Ullā, claiming, under a pretended will, the lands which the former subsequently constituted an endowment. This suit was prosecuted from court to court up to the Privy Council, and lasted some thirty years, during the whole of which period it continued to be uncertain whether the endowment was valid or not.

Hājī Muhammad Mohsin died in 1813, and the managers whom he had appointed seem immediately to have entered upon a course of mismanagement and embezzlement. According to the finding of the Court of Sadar Diwān Adalat, the proper objects of the endowment were neglected, the Government revenue fell into arrears, while the income was spent on quarrels between the managers, bribes to the police and *amins*, and gifts to the managers' relatives. Moreover, in order to increase their own profits at the expense of the trust, they forged a perpetual lease in their own favour and that of their relatives, purporting to have been executed by Hājī Muhammad Mohsin before the deed of foundation. The Board of Revenue interfered for the better government of the endowment under Regulation XIX of 1810, at first associating a Superintendent with the managers, then laying down rules for their control, and finally in 1817, as these milder measures had only made matters worse, dismissing the managers altogether. As their relatives were implicated with them in the frauds committed, a Government servant was appointed

to administer [the endowment under the orders of the Board and Local Agents. From this time the institution has been practically controlled by Government.

The Board of Revenue in 1817 founded a *madrasa* at an annual cost of Rs. 6,000, payable out of the funds of the endowment. But the leading feature in the first twenty years of Government management was the growth of a considerable fund vested in Government securities. In 1821 the property was settled in *patti* tenures, that is to say, subject to a quit-rent fixed in perpetuity, and about six lakhs of rupees were received on this account. But as the suit questioning the validity of the title was then pending in the Privy Council, it was made a condition that if that case were lost, and the new owner refused to confirm the *pattis*, the purchase-money should be returned with interest. To meet this possible charge, the proceeds of the *patti* sale were invested in Government securities, and, the interest being added as it accrued to the original principal, a capital sum of about 10 lakhs of rupees was accumulated.

In 1835, the law suits having then recently terminated, it was decided by the Government of India that three-ninths of the income from the zamindār, should be assigned permanently for the current expenses of Imāmbarā, etc. Of the two-ninths of the income assigned to the *mutuals*, one-ninth was assigned to the agent or *mutual* appointed by Government, and the remaining one-ninth was to be available for general purposes of a beneficent nature. The four-ninths share of the zamindāri income appropriated by Hājī Muhammad Mohsin to pensions and establishments was to remain liable to those charges, but when they lapsed, the income was to be added to the surplus fund appropriable to general purposes. There thus remained at the disposal of Government for general purposes of a beneficent nature, first, one-ninth of the annual income from the zamindāri; second, the lapsed pensions, etc.; and, third, the entire amount accruing from the interest of the accumulated fund invested in Government promissory notes. It was decided that, after setting apart from this last-mentioned fund such amount as might be necessary to provide appropriate buildings, including the charge of rebuilding or repairing the Imāmbarā and other religious edifices, if it should be found necessary to renew these, the remainder should be considered as a Trust Fund, the interest of which, with other items specified, might be "appropriated to the purpose of education by the formation of a collegiate institution imparting instruction of all kinds in the higher departments of education."

After the passing of Act XX of 1863 a Committee was appointed under section 7 of that enactment for the supervision of the endowment assigned for religious uses. This Committee controls the expenditure of a contribution equal to three-ninths of the income directly derived from the original estate in the form of rents and an allowance of Rs. 750 a month in respect of the charge for establishment to be borne by the four-ninths share. The manager, who now deals only with the religious assignment, having no concern with the property generally, receives one-ninth. The remainder of the estate, including the whole of the interest on the accumulation, is held to be at the disposal of Government as successor to the managers appointed by the founder. This fund was originally applied to the foundation and support of a college at Hooghly, affiliated to the Calcutta University and open to members of all religious communities. To this arrangement the objection was raised that an institution almost exclusively frequented by Hindus was not the most suitable recipient of the income of a distinctively Muhammadan endowment, and accordingly the Government of Bengal, by a resolution, dated the 29th July 1873, decided that the fund should be used exclusively for the promotion of education among Muhammadans, the Hooghly College being maintained from other sources. It has since then been devoted with great discretion, and with the best results, to assisting the progress of Muhammadan education throughout Bengal by various means, such as the payment of a part of the fees of Muhammadan students at the University and at Zilā schools, the appointment of Persian teachers at the latter, the foundation of scholarships and hostels, etc.

Under the orders of the Board of Revenue the estate was managed by the Collector of Jessore as *ex-officio* Local Agent from 1816 to February 1844, when it was transferred to the new district of Khulnā. The area of the estate is 167,652 acres, i.e., about 262 square miles; and the rental is Rs. 1,80,000, the cess demand Rs. 16,000, and the Government revenue Rs. 95,000. The property consists of three revenue-paying estates borne on the revenue-roll of Khulnā, viz., (1) Kismut *pargana* Saiyadpur; (2) Kismut *pargana* Sobnāli, and (3) Char Badronadi. Saiyadpur lies in the districts of Khulnā and Jessore and contains 446 *mauzas*; Sobnāli consists of parts of 7 *mauzas* and lies in the Khulnā district; it was originally *lakhrā*, but was resumed in 1829. Char Badronadi is a small resumed *char* in thāna Dumriā in Khulnā. The estate consists of 210 lots, of which 158 belong to *pāni* tenures, one to a farmed tenure and 47 to *kist* tenures.



Classified according to the amount of the rent demand there are 54 tenures under Rs. 500; 50 from Rs. 500 to Rs. 2,000; 13 from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 4,000; and one above Rs. 4,000. These tenures were created about 1823 on the basis of three years previous collections after a general measurement and assessment. [*Report of the Muhammadan Educational Endowments Committee, Calcutta, 1838.*]

**Sātkhirā**—Headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated in 22° 43' N. and 89° 5' E at a distance of 8 miles from the Patkelghāta steamer station of the Khulnā-Nārayanganj Mail Service. The town lies along the bank of a narrow *khāl* connecting the Betnā with the Kuchiamor *bil* or marsh, which in its turn, drains through several *khāls* into the Ichhāmāti river. It has a population, according to the census of 1901, of 8,356 persons, and contains the usual subdivisional offices, Munsif's court, municipal offices, sub-jail, a District Board bungalow and a dispensary. The educational institutions are a girls' school and an Entrance school, the latter being supported by the local zamindars and also aided by Government. The town contains five Hindu temples, dedicated to the following gods and goddesses, Siva, Gobinda Deb, Mahakal Bhairab, Ananda Mayi and Annapūrnā; they were constructed by Babu Pran Nāth Chaudhri, the grand-father of the present local zamindar. Of these temples that dedicated to Annapūrnā is considered the best specimen of architecture.

Regarding the climate of the town and the possibility of improving it, the Bengal Drainage Committee observed as follows in their report on the Presidency Division, published in 1907. "Although the figures of mortality only show an average annual death-rate from fever of 15 per mille (1901-05) in the Sātkhirā town, the local accounts are emphatic as to its unhealthiness, which it is hoped to remedy by creating a greater flow in the adjacent *khāl*. It has been suggested that this might be done either by throwing an embankment across the river Betnā just below the junction of the *khāl* with it on the north-east, thus diverting its waters into the *khāl*, or by introducing the water of the Ichhāmāti by a series of cuts from Chānduriā on the north-west. The whole scheme is very much in the air and requires elaboration. We are not disposed to approve of the sacrifice of the present channel of the Betnā south-east of Sātkhirā in the interests of that town; and as regards the alternative, all that seems known is that a previous enquiry feared the danger of inundation if the water of the Ichhāmāti was brought in. It is surmised that the risk no longer exists, but no levels have been



taken, and we are not prepared to accept that opinion. The simple deepening of the *khal* stands as a project in the famine programme, but it is doubtful if this would have much effect upon health."

**Satkhirā Subdivision.**—Western subdivision of the district lying between  $21^{\circ} 38'$  and  $22^{\circ} 57'$  N. and between  $88^{\circ} 54'$  and  $89^{\circ} 23'$  E. It has an area of 719 square miles, excluding the Sundarbans tract, and is bounded on the north by the district of Jessore; on the west by the 24-Parganas, from which it is separated by the Ichāmāti, Sonai, Jamunā and Raimangal rivers; on the south by the Bay of Bengal; and on the east by the \*Khulnā subdivision, from which it is separated by the river Kabadak. The subdivision is an alluvial tract cut up by large rivers, which are saline up to the point where the tides reach. These rivers run from north to south into the Bay of Bengal, and small *khal*s or creeks run from east to west and communicate with the *bils* and rivers. The land towards the north is comparatively high, the central portion is low-lying, and in the south are the Sundarbans. The population of the subdivision was 488,217 in 1901, as compared with 495,600 in 1891, the density being 652 persons to the square mile. It contains 1,467 villages and two towns, viz., Satkhirā and Dobhata. For administrative purposes it is divided into five thanas, Satkhirā, Asasuni, Kalaroa, Kaliganj and Māgura.

**Senhāti.**—A village in the Khulnā subdivision, situated 5 miles north of Khulnā. It is the headquarters of an Union Committee, and contains a dispensary opened in 1907 and a High English school. It also enjoys the reputation of being the home of the Kulin Baidyas or physicians of Eastern Bengal. Formerly there were some large sugar factories, but these have disappeared, and the place has lost much of its trade. The bazar is called Nimāi Rai's Bazar after a law agent (*mukhtār*) of that name in the service of Rānī Bhawānī of Nator, a lady famous for her piety. Local tradition says that Nimāi Rai held a *tāluk* here under the Mughal Government and established the bazar on the land. There is a temple dedicated to Kālī, which was built by Rājā Srikānta Rai, who was proprietor of the land till about 1797. Along the banks of the river there are two other shrines located in thatched huts—one dedicated to Sitalā, goddess of small-pox, and the other to Jwāra Nārāyan, the god of fever.

The place is described as follows by Sir James Westland in his *Report on the District of Jessore*: "It forms with its suburbs the largest collection of houses in the district, and I think it may claim also to be the most innerv place in the whole district."

Old tanks filled with weeds and mud, and their sides covered with rank jungle, are everywhere scattered over it; and many unoccupied spaces within its limits, which anywhere else would be cultivated, are a mass of underwood. The roads and paths of the village, except one very fair one, which is kept in order, wind through passes of brushwood". It is a happy task to record the fact that this description no longer holds good, and that the village has improved considerably since it was written.

**Sundarbans.**—The southernmost portion of the Gangetic delta, situated between  $21^{\circ} 31'$  and  $22^{\circ} 38'$  N. and between  $88^{\circ} 5'$  and  $90^{\circ} 28'$  E., extending over an area of 6,526 square miles, of which 2,688 square miles lie in Khulnā, 2,941 square miles in the 24-Parganas and 897 square miles in Backergunge. This tract is bounded on the north by the permanently-settled lands of the 24-Parganas, Khulnā and Backergunge; on the east and west respectively by the estuaries of the Meghna and Hooghly; and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. It has a length of about 170 miles along the sea face and stretches inland for a distance of from 60 to 80 miles.

Briefly, the Sundarbans may be described as a low flat alluvial plain in which the process of land-making is still going on, covered, where not under cultivation, with forests and swamps, intersected from north to south by wide tidal rivers or estuaries, and from west to east by narrow tidal rivers or creeks. All the estuaries, and most of the rivers, are salt; there is little or no current down them, and they are practically tidal watercourses. They are connected with each other by an intricate series of branches, and the latter in their turn by innumerable channels; so that the whole tract is a tangled network of estuaries, rivers, and watercourses, which enclose a large number of islands of various shapes and sizes. These flat swampy islands are covered with dense forest, the most plentiful and important species being *sundri* (*Heritiera littoralis*), which thrives most where the water in the channels is least brackish. Along the sea face the forest is almost exclusively composed of mangrovia, which sometimes extend into tidal water, but elsewhere are separated from the sea by a line of low sand hills or dunes. The felling of trees for timber, planks, posts, and fuel, employs a class—not a caste, for they are both Hindus and Muhammadans—of professional woodcutters termed *banhis*. They proceed in boats to certain localities in the forests called *gais*, each of which is presided over by a *fakir*, who is supposed to possess the occult power of charming away tigers and who has undoubtedly some knowledge of wood-craft.

Here the wood-cutters work six days in each week, for one day in the week (but no particular day) is set apart for the worship of the sylvan deity presiding over that particular forest. The *jagir*, who is supposed to have some personal knowledge of this supernatural personage and of his or her dislikes—for such deities are of either sex—acts as high priest on these occasions, and is readily remunerated for his services.

Cultivation is confined to the north, where reclamation has been effected with considerable difficulty. It is hard for any one who has not experienced the obstacles that must be encountered and overcome in an undertaking of this kind, to form any adequate idea of them. First of all the lands have to be embanked. For this purpose a line is cut through the forest along the banks of the stream, embankments are thrown along it, and strong dams are constructed across the mouths of the smaller streams to keep salt water out. This being done, the forest has to be cleared, tanks dug and huts constructed. Tigers sometimes put a stop to clearing operations, by killing the men employed on them; and cases have been known of tracts of land already under cultivation being abandoned, owing to tigers carrying off the cultivators while at work in their fields, and breaking into their houses at night, killing men, women, and children. Tigers are also very destructive to cattle, and great damage is done to the crops by sounders of wild pigs and herds of deer. Last, but not least, of the difficulties to be overcome is fever. When it prevails, numbers are laid up; their lands remain fallow, and before next season are overrun with reed jungle, which springs up directly the forest is cleared, unless the lands are immediately cultivated. This, when once it has established itself, is most difficult to eradicate, taking four or five years to kill.

To the south of the Sundarbans are numerous reefs extending from 18 miles to 30 miles out into the sea, with a curious depression called the "Swatch of no ground," which is described in the next article. The reefs consist of very hard ground, while the channels between them have a soft bottom with an increasing depth of water towards the land. A stiff sloping bank extends from the land sea-ward and the channels cut through it by the rivers are more or less deep, according to the volume of water conveyed by them and the rapidity of the current. The nearer the mouth of a river, the deeper is the channel and the softer the bottom. If a ship is in a channel, the ground will become very soft, and the depth increase, as the land is approached; but, if not in one, the ground will become very

hard, and the depth decrease. Wherever the ground is quite soft, the opening, which is apparently an opening between islands, may be steered for in safety, and it will soon be found to be the entrance to a river.

The general aspect of the Sundarbans gradually changes as one travels west to east from the Hooghly towards the Meghnâ, and the whole tract may be divided into three portions, viz., (1) the land from the Hooghly to the Jamunâ and Kaliudî rivers included in the 24-Parganas, (2) the tract between the Jamunâ and Baleswar lying in Khulnâ, and (3) the tract between the Baleswar or Haringhâtâ and the Meghnâ which is comprised in Backergunge. The land near the two boundary rivers, the Hooghly and Meghnâ, i.e., in the 24-Parganas and Backergunge, is comparatively high, but it slopes downwards towards the middle portion, i.e., Khulnâ and the south-east of the 24-Parganas. The middle tract is low and swampy, and at no very distant period was doubtless one great marsh. Indeed, the maps of the old surveys conducted by Major Rennell and others, between 1764 and 1772, show a large tract of country between the Jamunâ and the lower part of the Ganges as a morass intersected by deep creeks and watercourses.

The superficial aspect of the three divisions is what might be expected from their physical character. The belt of cultivated land from the Hooghly to the Jamunâ in the 24-Parganas is surrounded by large embankments to keep out the salt water; the land is comparatively high, and dotted with small hamlets, or single huts surrounded by little gardens. In the marshy tract of the Khulnâ Sundarbans, between the Jamunâ and Baleswar, miles of low-lying half-cleared land extend without a vestige of habitation. The cultivators who till this section rarely live on or near their fields, and the latter are surrounded with low embankments. The third division, i.e., the Backergunge Sundarbans, between the Baleswar and the Meghnâ, affords a pleasant change from the depressing swampy atmosphere of the Khulnâ Sundarbans. The land being high, and the river water comparatively sweet, no embankments are necessary to protect the crops. The soil, too, is richer; and every well-to-do peasant has his thatched hut and granaries, surrounded by an orchard of coconut, betel-nut and other trees.

There is this marked distinction too that the Ganges and its branches have long ago left the western portion of the Sundarbans and now pour their waters further to the east. Between the Hooghly and the Jamunâ the rivers are for the most part salt water rivers. The Baleswar or Haringhâtâ, and the rivers of the

Backergunge Sundarbans eastward of it, are all distributaries of the Ganges, and contain sweet water during most seasons, down to within a short distance of the Bay of Bengal. In the central portion the water of the rivers, though not so saline as those further to the west, is gradually becoming more brackish as the rivers are silting up at the heads and the tides come further up.

These waterways are of the first importance, as being the chief means of communication by water between Calcutta and the Eastern Bengal. All the streams are tidal, and the boats proceed on the ebb and flow of the tide. Part of the day's journey has to be made with the flow, so that the duration of the voyage depends entirely upon the success with which each tide is caught. A whole fleet of boats may be seen at the recognized anchorages waiting for the tide, and the district from which they come can be readily distinguished by the shape of the bow and stern. Some of these anchorages are far from any human habitation, but necessities of all kinds (including water) can be obtained at a sort of floating bazar. Country boats also ply from place to place along the cross channels, some of which are so narrow and so overhung with trees that the rigging of small craft at times gets caught in the branches.

The main streams, during the inundation in the rainy season, have what are usually termed "double currents," that is, the surface down to a certain depth flows downward or southward, while below that depth the tide advances upward or northward. This is caused by the freshets sweeping down from a higher level and over-topping the flood tide from the sea. Even to skilful swimmers this treacherous double current or under-current is most dangerous. A person falling accidentally or suddenly into a stream naturally sinks at first below the surface, when the under-current drags him in one direction, while the upper current, flowing in a contrary direction, prevents his rising to the surface. The result is that he is quickly drowned; and the body is sometimes never recovered.

The Sundarbans present several peculiar features, which have been well described in an article *The Gangetic Delta* published in the Calcutta Review, March 1859. "In whatever light we regard the Sundarbans—whether as a tract of country possessing an abundant pachydermatous fauna, or a flora peculiar to itself, whether we look at it as the stronghold of gigantic and destructive saurians, voracious sharks and peculiar fish, whether as a tract of country of the most beautiful aspect, but at the same time most fatally pestilential—we must still view it as a curious and an anomalous tract, for here we see a surface soil composed of

black liquid mud supporting the huge rhinoceros, the sharp-hoofed hog, the mud-bating tiger, the delicate and fastidiously clean spotted deer, and nourishing and upholding large timber trees; we see fishes climbing trees; tides running in two directions in the same creek and at the same moment; we see wild hog and tigers, animals generally avoiding water, swimming across the broadcast rivers as if for amusement; in one creek a dead calm, in the next a raging sea; in some creeks the abundance of insect life is overpowering, in others close by not a living creature is to be seen; some creeks are deadly to sleep in, others perfectly free from miasma; some are dry at low water, in others, and those contiguous, no bottom can be found at ten fathoms; in one, all is fog and doubt, in the next, all is in the brightest sunshine; and many other anomalies present themselves, all rendering the Sunderbans a spot of much interest, offering as they do so many subjects for investigation and research. Most travellers on passing through this labyrinth of interminable forest, mud and water, become exceedingly wearied with the monotonous appearance of the banks of the rivers and creeks, and are only too glad when they escape into the open and cultivated northern parts of the delta, where all the breadth of the land is one vast sheet of rice cultivation."

Since the above was written the one-horned rhinoceros has become rare and is only found within the southern portion of the reserved forests. Buffaloes are also fast disappearing and at present are found only in the waste lands of the Backergunge portion of the Sunderbans. Tigers and crocodiles, however, are still as numerous as ever. A number of natives are killed every year by tigers, which break through the matted walls of dwelling-houses at night and carry off their inmates; it is a curious fact that they never carry their victims away through the side of the house by which they enter, but break through the opposite side to do so. Crocodiles are equally destructive. It is reported that they will enter houses at night, and that during the day-time they frequently move into the fields, seize cattle, and drag them into the nearest stream. Among birds more or less peculiar to this tract may be mentioned the gigantic stork or adjutant, known to the natives as *havgila* or the bone swallower, on account of its swallowing its food, bone and meat together; the feathers of this bird furnish the beautiful plumes known as "marabou feathers." The reptile tribe is well represented in the Sunderbans, both venomous and non-venomous. Among the former are included salt water snakes, the deadly cobra (*Naja tripudians*), the scarcely less deadly, carpet viper (*Echis*

*carinata*), and the large venomous snake-eater (*Ophiophagus bungarus*), which is remarkable for subsisting on its own kind, devouring its smaller brethren without mercy. Of the non-venomous snakes may be mentioned the huge python, erroneously called the Indian boa constrictor (*Python molurus*), which attains great length and is capable of swallowing deer or pig whole, and the *dhamin* (*Ptyas mucosus*), both of which are common. During the cold weather months special snake-catchers visit the Sundarbans and capture numerous snakes, which are disposed of in Calcutta.

The name Sundarbans is an incorrect English designation, the tract being properly known as Sundarban. Various etymologies have been proposed in order to explain the name. The word has been derived from *sundar* and *ban*, meaning a beautiful forest, or from *samudra-ban*, through its corrupted and vulgar form *samunda-ban*, the whole meaning the forests near the sea. Others, again, have derived the word from *Chandradwip-ban*, i.e., the Chandradwip forest, Chandrawip being the name of an old zamindari occupying the south and south-east of Backergunge. The name has also been connected with the Chandabhandas, an old forest tribe engaged in making salt, who are mentioned in a copper-plate inscription, dated 1136 Sambat or A.D. 1079, which was found at Idulpur (Adilpur) in the north of Backergunge. Grant, in his *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal* (1786) derives it from *Chandra bāndh* meaning the embankments of the moon, because, he says, "the richest and greatest parts of the Sundarbans are still comprised in the ancient zamindari of Chandradwip (lunar territory)" and he somewhat fancifully justifies the derivation by saying that it means the offspring of the moon and refers to the tract being overflowed by the tide. It is now generally recognized that the name is derived from *sundri-ban* or the forest of *sundri* trees, for that tree is the commonest in the forests, and the word is sometimes pronounced locally as Sundarban. The application of the name Sundarban or Sundarbans to this tract is evidently modern. The Muhammadan historians do not use the term, but give the coast-strip from Hijili to the Meghna the name of Bhāti, which signifies low-lands subject to the influx of the tides; and this name was used at the close of the 18th century by Mr. Grant, who says that this tract is "always included under the local description of Bhatty with all the neighbouring lowlands overflowed by the tides."\*

**Swatch of no ground.**—A name given to a great natural depression or hole in the Bay of Bengal situated due south of the

\*For much of the information contained in the above account, I am indebted to a note by Mr. D. H. E. Sander.



Raimangal and Mālanohā estuaries. It extends nearly north by east from  $21^{\circ}$  to  $21^{\circ} 22'$  north latitude, is five leagues in breadth, and has its northern extremity about five leagues from the land. The following account of this curious basin is quoted from the *Manual of the Geology of India* (Calcutta, 1893):—"In the sea outside the middle of the delta there is a singularly deep area, known and marked on charts as the "Swatch of no ground," in which the soundings, which are from 5 to 10 fathoms all round, change almost suddenly to 200 and even 300 fathoms. This remarkable depression runs north and south and has been referred to a local sinking; but it appears more probable, as has been shown by Mr. Fergusson, that the sediment is carried away from the spot, and deposition prevented, by the strong currents engendered by a meeting of the tides from the east and west coasts of the Bay of Bengal." Mr. Fergusson also shows that, so long as the Bay of Bengal has preserved its present form, the meeting of the tides must have favoured the formation of a spit of sand along the present position of the Sundarbans, as the lower portion of the Ganges delta is called, and that any great deposit of silt seaward of the present line is impeded by the fine sediment being washed away by the tidal currents and deposited in the deeper parts of the Bay.

"In spite of all that has been written on this subject, the origin of the "Swatch of no ground" has by no means been cleared up. A very similar depression has been shown to exist in the bed of the shallow sea off the Indus delta, and the cause in both cases has probably been the same, a combination of an excess of subsidence with a deficiency of sedimentation, the latter due to the action of surface currents in sweeping away the silt-laden waters. It is not in accordance with what we know to suppose that, at such depths as we are dealing with, there can be any currents of sufficient velocity to account for the depression by actual erosion."

**Tāla.**—A village in the Sātkhīrā subdivision, situated on the left bank of the Kabadak. It is the headquarters of a thāna, and contains a District Board bungalow, an English school, and a dispensary, opened in 1896, which is called the Diamond Jubilee dispensary.

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